

# What you need to know about Rabies

RABIES is a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the central nervous system. The virus lives in the saliva and brain tissue of infected animals.

Rabies is carried mainly by wild animals such as raccoons, skunks, bats, coyotes, and foxes. However, stray dogs and cats can easily pick up rabies from wild or stray animals. Rabies only infects mammals, which means that pets, livestock, wildlife and people are at risk.



Rabies is spread mainly through bites from infected animals, but the disease can be spread in other ways too. For example, rabies can be passed by scratches from an infected animal or when infected saliva or brain tissue comes into contact with: open wounds, skin breaks or mucous membranes like the thin layers of tissue that line the eyes, nose and mouth.

Fortunately, there are steps that you can take steps to protect yourself and your loved ones.

- 1) ☐ Avoid contact with all wild animals. Never try to feed or handle any wild ☐ animals and never adopt wild animals as pets. Keep wild animals out of your ☐ home by securing doors and windows, capping chimneys with screens and ☐ closing off any openings in porches, basements and attics. Secure trash cans ☐ and any pet food stored outside in animal-proof containers to avoid access by ☐ wild or stray animals.
- 2) ☐ Stay away from strays and other people's pets (you do not know if they have been ☐ ☐ protected against rabies).
- 3) ☐ Report stray animals to your local animal care and control office.



You can keep your pets safe too.

- 1) ☐ Ask your pet's doctor about rabies shots.
- 2) ☐ Confine your pets to your property (pets that are allowed to roam ☐ free are at higher risk for getting rabies).
- 3) ☐ Never feed pets outdoors (food left outdoors will attract stray or wild animals).
- 4) ☐ If your pet is attacked or bitten by an animal contact your pet's doctor and your local ☐ ☐ animal care and control office. A rabies booster shot can help protect your pet. If your ☐ pet is not treated it could become a threat to you and your loved ones.



Know the signs of rabies in wild or stray animals and in pets.

A change in the normal behavior of an animal is the most common sign of rabies. Two forms of rabies are dumb rabies and furious rabies (both forms end in death).



Dumb Rabies is when the animal may become shy, hide or be very approachable. This may be followed by sluggishness, confusion and depression.

Furious Rabies is when the animal may become excitable, upset or angry. At times the animal may seem confused and calm, then suddenly attack when approached. The animal may also lose all caution for its enemies.

Other signs of rabies include:

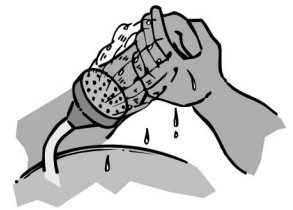
- daytime appearances by animals normally active at night
- staggering, weakness and not being able to walk
- a change in the sound of an animal's voice
- being unable to eat or drink
- drooling
- uncontrolled shaking
- frothing at the mouth



\*If you notice signs of rabies in an animal, stay away from it and call your local animal care and control office.

Know what to do if you are bitten by a wild or stray animal or by a pet.

- 1) Wash the wound with warm, soapy water.
- 2) If the animal is wild, confine it if you can.
- 3) Call your local animal care and control office at once.
- 4) Kill the animal only as a last resort, but do not damage its head (the animal's brain may need to be tested).
- 5) If the animal is someone's pet, get the owner's name and address and ask for proof that the animal has received rabies shots.
- 6) Call your doctor at once (he or she can decide if you need rabies shots).
- 7) Report the bite to your local animal care and control office. All pets suspected of rabies must be confined for 10 days of observation.



\*To learn more about rabies you can contact your pet's doctor, local animal shelters, animal welfare centers, animal care and control offices or local and state health departments.

***Please play your part in effective rabies control!***

San Bernardino County  
Animal Care & Control Program  
**(800) 472-5609**

